

TESTIMONY OF JIM BROWN
ON BEHALF OF THE MONTANA WOOL GROWERS ASSOCIATION
IN SUPPORT OF HB 363
108 S. PACIFIC ST.
DILLON, MT 59725

INTRODUCTION

- Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee
 - On behalf of the members of the Montana Wool Growers Association, I rise today in strong support of HB 363.
 - As Representative Cuffe stated, this bill is at the request of the membership of the Montana Wool Growers Association.
 - It is an attempt to ensure that Montana's state-adopted wolf management plan is adequately funded and adequately carried out by Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks.
 - This bill is a recognition that while the delisting of wolves found within the borders of Montana is presently out of the hands of this legislature, proper management of wolves must still be carried out.
 - While the Montana Wool Growers Association strongly opposed the reintroduction of the gray wolf into Yellowstone Park and Central Idaho in 1995 and 1996, and while the Association still has strong concerns that livestock producers are the ones really paying for the cost of these predators, the reality is that wolves are here to stay.
 - That is why the Wool Growers are offering up and working to enact legislation such as this one that constitute a good faith attempt to actually deal with the management of the wolf species in this State.
 - We are pleased to be the one agriculture and conservation association who is taking an active lead on ensuring that Montana's wolf management plan is implemented, followed and funded.

BACKGROUND

- With this is mind, as Representative Cuffe stated, the federal government approved Montana's wolf conservation and management plan in January 2004.
- When the State of Montana studied the environmental consequences of adopting a wolf management plan, it recognized that the wolf had, was, and will kill livestock in Montana.
- Further, when adopting the wolf management plan, the State of Montana recognized that the presence of the wolf on Montana's landscape would have a negative financial impact on Montana's farming and ranching community – decreasing Montana agriculture income and increasing the cost of doing business for Montana's farmers and ranchers.
- I have brought with me the relevant portions of the EIS for the Committee's review.
- The environmental review recognized that livestock owners would be the ones to suffer most directly from the push to increase wolf populations in Montana.
- The plan also recognized the damage that would be done by the wolf to game populations in Montana, namely elk, deer and moose as a result of reintroduction.

- To mitigate against the damage this was to be, and is being done by, the wolf, the plan called for (1) collaring wolf packs, (2) providing money to kill problem wolves, (3) to reimburse livestock producers for losses caused by wolves, and (4) to enact programs to prevent wolf-livestock conflicts.
- This legislature has done its job in statutorily enacting and authorizing these provisions.
- However, the programs are seriously underfunded, not funded at all, or are not being carried out adequately.
- Let me briefly discuss each of the three programs:
- First:
 - (1) wolf collaring and tracking – FWP is required by statute to collar every wolf pack in order that (1) the public knows how many wolves there are in Montana, which is critically important to getting wolves off the endangered list, and (2) locating wolves who have depredated against cattle, so that those wolves can be eliminated.
 - The purpose of wolf collaring is sound and the program is being carried out. But, the reality on the ground and in the field is that FWP is not carrying out its statutory mandate to collar, track and count wolves in Montana.
 - In fact, by its own admission, the agency presently can only guess at the location of wolf packs, generally only finds about new packs after they kill livestock, and only guestimates at the number of wolves in Montana.
 - Since these activities are necessary for the success of Montana's wolf management plan, FWP should be directing more resources, namely funding, to ensuring that wolves are collared. What's more, FWP should be encouraged to use collars that contain global positioning system technology.
- Second,
 - (2) the livestock loss and mitigation board, --
 - In order to mitigate the damage done by the presence of the wolf, the Legislature created the Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Board, whose mission is to minimize predation on livestock, to provide compensation for depredated livestock, and to prevent livestock-wolf conflicts.
 - The mission of the board is sound and the Board, when it has adequate funding, carries out its mission well.
 - However, as just noted, the problem is that the Board has, since its creation in 2007, been seriously underfunded.
 - The problem of underfunding is being compounded by the fact that the number of wolf depredations has exploded over the last several years, to the point that where gray wolf kills on livestock in Montana occurred at the rate of an animal per day in 2009.
 - The sharp increase in wolf depredations has depleted severely the resources of the Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Board.
 - In 2009, the Board expended \$145,000 of its \$150,000 budget to compensate the ranching community for losses.
 - In 2008, the Board ran out of funds to pay all the 2008 death losses.
 - All payments being made by the Board are going for death losses; no money is being spent for the loss prevention mission of the Board. This is a trend that not projected to change in the near future.

- Further, compounding the problem for the ranching community is the fact that only one in eight wolf kills are confirmed, thereby shifting the true cost of wolf management to the farming and ranching community
- As Representative Cuffe referenced in his opening, the purpose of today's bill is to bring attention to the fact that the Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Board exists and to bring attention to the need to adequately fund the Board, so that it may carry out its mission.
- You are going to hear today from FWP officials that taking a portion of the wolf hunting license revenue is a diversion of FWP revenue that is going to cost the state millions in federal funds.
- Setting aside the question of why the State of Montana continually allows the federal government to dictate state wildlife management policy, the question needs to be asked why the wolf management plan even calls for having a compensation program if it is not going to be funded.
- The question needs to be asked of FWP officials, do they recognize wolf compensation as part of wolf management activities in Montana or not.
- It is my hope that this Legislature will see through the scare tactics used by the Department to ensure there is not proper oversight of FWP's funding sources, and proper direction of those funding sources by this Legislature.
- I know that FWP enjoys being, for the most part, outside of this Legislature's budget process, but coming in with fiscal scare tactics such as hanging a \$20 million fiscal note on this bill, which is designed to carry out the management plan adopted by FWP, is in no way helpful.
- I trust this Committee will consider using wolf license revenue to fund all portions of Montana's wolf management plan.
- Finally, and third,
- (3) Montana's wolf management calls for killing wolves that deplete and for managing wolf numbers to ensure that big game populations in Montana aren't devastated.
- Well, we are all aware that wolves are depleting livestock in every skyrocketing amounts, and we are all aware of the damage that is being done to hunting opportunities in Montana by the presence of the gray wolf.
- Given that wildlife is publicly owned, the management of predators, such as the wolf, is, and should be, a public responsibility.
- The Wildlife Services division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture has been tasked with the important role of controlling wildlife when wildlife causes damage to agriculture or threatens public health and safety or threatens game numbers.
- While USDA personnel do the actual wolf damage management work in Montana, they coordinate closely with personnel from Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks who have management authority over such species as mountain lions, black bears and wolves.
- MWGA works closely with Wildlife Services personnel and considers those personnel to be effective partners in the sheep industry's own efforts to use non-lethal predator control methods.
- The Wool Growers strongly supports this cooperative relationship between the State of Montana and the Federal Government to manage wolves.

- What we don't support is how little money is provided by FWP to Wildlife Services to do the actual collaring, killing, and tracking work.
- Presently, FWP provides only \$110,000 for this kind of work and it's not because FWP necessarily wants to give this money to Wildlife Services.
- Believe it or not, this money was made possible and available for wolf work due to the fact that the Montana Wool Growers Association secured such funding from the legislature years ago for predator control work.
- Given that Montana's ranchers and farmers work with this agency almost on a weekly, if not monthly, basis, 'we' understand that this agency is not being fully compensated for the Montana wolf management work it does.
- This is borne out by the fact that wildlife services had to stop doing wolf management work last fall because the agency ran out of funds.
- This lack of funding for this critically important work is a problem that needs to be redressed, and redressed immediately.

- As has been mentioned earlier, all three of these programs just referenced are authorized under the Montana wolf management plan and authorized under authority of state law.
- Therefore, the fact that these programs are not being properly carried out or implemented is not the result of a failure on the part of the legislature to see the problem and provide the necessary implementation authority.
- Rather, in the opinion of the Montana Wool Grower's Association, the fact that we are having so many problems 'on the ground' in terms of managing wolves is a product of FWP not dedicating enough resources to the problem, not making these programs a priority and a problem of funding.
- In the planning documents supporting the wolf management plan, it was estimated that roughly \$900,000 to \$1 million would be needed to manage wolves in Montana every year.
- The government was supposed to fund the majority of this wolf management cost. But, the state was, and is, supposed to kick in financially as well. The State has not done enough to meet its obligations, and the Wool Growers is concerned about how FWP is allocating money received from the federal government for wolf management.
- The Wool Growers believes that Representative Cuffe's bill is a major step forward in redressing both the management and funding shortfall problems.
- The bill makes sense in terms of policy because it directs that the revenue generated by the hunting of wolves should be directed solely to the management of that species.
- The bill also makes sense in that it provides a dedicated and continual stream of revenue to carrying out the specific provisions of the wolf management program.
- This bill makes sense because it helps FWP with its present wolf management responsibilities by dedicating revenue to wolf management now.
- This bill makes sense because it is forward looking in that ensures that, once the wolf comes off the endangered species list [which really is just a question of time] that Montana is prepared financially to deal with the problem.
- In sum, this bill is good public policy.

CONCLUSION:

- MWGA members understand wildlife plays an enriching role in our lives. That is why MWGA's membership has taken an active role in working with FWP in crafting and enacting Montana's first ever Bighorn Sheep Conservation Strategy, in providing hunters with access across their lands, and why the membership has worked closely with FWP on wildlife habit issues.
- However, knowing the economic devastation that is being done by the gray wolf in Montana both to agriculture interests and to hunting opportunities, MWGA's membership has sought to be active this legislature in pushing you, our elected officials, to find funding sources and to direct funding to carry out proper wolf management in Montana.
- Providing a dedicated source of funding for wolf collaring, wolf compensation, and wolf mitigation is vital both to the economic survival of Montana's top economic industry — the livestock industry and to the success of Montana's game populations.
- We thank Representative Cuffe for recognizing the problems this bill is trying to address and for being an advocate for us on this issue.
- On behalf of MWGA's membership, I respectfully request this Committee pass this legislation and send it to the House floor for full consideration.
- With the Chair's permission I will submit my written testimony for the record, which such testimony includes several Montana Wool Growers Associations Resolutions on wolf management.
- I am happy to answer any questions the Committee may have.

MONTANA WOOL GROWERS ASSOCIATION RESOLUTIONS

Conservation Licenses (2010)

Whereas USDA Wildlife Service's funding is not adequate to allow them to conduct as efficient a predator damage control program in Montana as would be possible with adequate funding,

Whereas USDA WS wolf damage management work has increased substantially since 2003 with no new funding,

Whereas the Federal protection given to wolves significantly limit the type of control tools USDA WS can use,

Whereas Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks provides only \$110,000 to USDA WS for wolf work and that money was originally designated for USDA WS to benefit wildlife, mostly big game,

Whereas, hunters are suffering the consequences of increasing wolf depredations on big game species and should assist in funding predator damage management activities in Montana since such activates greatly enhance the production and survival of big game species and upland birds,

Whereas, without the ability of the USDA WS to control wolves that prey on livestock there will be increased depredations on wildlife,

Therefore be it resolved, the MWGA supports legislation adding a minimum of \$1.00 fee to all conservation licenses sold in Montana, with the proceeds going to predator damage management operations. These funds are above and beyond funds previously allocated to USDA WS.

Wolf Depredation Funding (2010)

Whereas, Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (MFWP) receives over \$600,000 annually from the USFWS for wolf management,

Whereas, USDA WS does all of the wolf damage management in Montana,

Whereas, USDA WS receive inadequate funding to deal with all the predator problems in the state,

Whereas MFWP provides USDA WS with only \$110,000 for wolf management when wolf activities are costing USDA WS over \$400,000 per year,

Whereas this \$110,000 is not new funding, but was historically provided by MFWP to USDA WS for protection of antelope and deer,

Whereas, MFWP has not done enough to protect Montana's livestock from wolf depredations except to authorize USDA WS to do all the predator control work.

Therefore be it resolved that the MWGA request and support legislative actions by Congress to redirect US Department of the Interior, USFWS funding for wolf management from MFWP to USDA WS where it can be used to protect livestock from all wolf depredation.

Wolf Delisting (2010)

The MWGA supports Federal Legislation that would delist wolves and transfer management to the States.

Fish, Wildlife Funding (2007)

MWGA recognizes the importance of predator control on game populations and encourages the Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks, and legislature, to continue, and increase, funding for predator control.

Furthermore, MWGA believes this funding should be used in areas where there is a secondary benefit to protect livestock from predators and that WS should have some discretion where that work is done.

Wildlife Services Funding for Wolf Control (2007)

The MWGA opposes any effort to shift existing predator control funds to wolf management, or control. These needs should be funded with additional Federal monies.

Collaring of Wolves for Monitoring (2008)

The Montana Wool Growers Association request that the agencies responsible for wolf management must continue the collaring of wolf packs mandated by Montana Code "MCA 87-5-132 Use of radio tracking collars for monitoring wolf packs"

Funding should not come from traditional predator control used for the protection of private property and livestock.

Wolves kill 120 sheep at ranch near Dillon

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HELENA - While the debate about how many wolves are enough to ensure a healthy population will again come to a head in a federal courtroom Monday, a Dillon-area ranch is picking up the pieces from the largest known wolf depredation in recent history.

In a highly unusual move for wolves, they killed about 120 adult male sheep in one incident on the Rebish/Konen Livestock Ranch south of Dillon last week.

That compares with a total of 111 sheep killed by wolves in Montana in 2008, according to Carolyn Sime, the statewide wolf coordinator for Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

"This is one of the most significant losses that I've seen," Sime said. "That situation is really unfortunate."

Suzanne Stone with Defenders of Wildlife added that in the 20 years she's been working toward ensuring healthy wolf populations, this is the first time she's heard of such a mass killing.

"I've heard of bears or mountain lions doing that, but what usually happens is the sheep panic and jump on top of one another or fall into a ditch and suffocate," Stone said. "I've never heard of any situation where wolves killed so much livestock in such a short period of time."

"... This is the most extreme case I've ever heard about."

The ranch has suffered confirmed wolf depredations twice in three weeks. In late July, three wolves - two blacks and a gray - killed at least 26 rams. The gray wolf was lethally shot by a federal wildlife manager, and one of the blacks was injured. They thought that would scare off the rest of the pack.

Last week, wolves struck again. This time, they took out 120 purebred Rambouillet bucks that ranged in size from about 150 to 200 pounds, and were the result of more than 80 years of breeding.

"We went up to the pasture on Thursday (Aug. 20) - we go up there every two or three days - and everything was fine," rancher Jon Konen said. "The bucks were in the pasture; I had about 100 heifers with them on 600 acres."

He had some business to attend to in Billings, so Konen told his son to be sure to check on the livestock while he was gone.

"He called me, and said it was a mess up there. He said there were dead bucks all up and down the creek. We went up there the next day and tried to count them, but there were too many to count," Konen recalled.

"I had tears in my eyes, not only for myself but for what my stock had to go through," he added. "They were running, getting chewed on, bit and piled into a corner. They were bit on the neck, on the back, on the back of the hind leg.

"They'd cripple them, then rip their sides open."

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks has taken the lead in wolf management from the U.S. Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service, and the state agency has a "memorandum of understanding" with the federal Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services to provide damage management services when livestock are killed by wolves.

After the dead sheep were found, Graeme McDougal with Wildlife Services flew in a small plane over the sheep pasture, looking for the one or two remaining black wolves to complete the control work requested by Montana FWP. Within a half-mile of the sheep pasture, he spotted the Centennial pack of three adult gray wolves and five pups.

McDougal shot and killed the one uncollared adult wolf, but wasn't authorized to remove any more wolves.

This was the first known depredation incident for the Centennial pack in 2009.

Konen doesn't want to wade into the debate over the reintroduction of wolves in the Rockies, but said that in his opinion, it's time to stop managing wolves and start controlling them.

"My bucks were on private ground, in a pasture where we've been pasturing them for 50 years. The wolves were intruders that were in the wrong place," he said.

Wolves were recently taken off the list of animals protected under the Endangered Species Act, and both Montana and Idaho have instituted hunting seasons for them this year. Idaho will allow 265 wolves to be taken by hunters, in a season that starts Tuesday. Montana will allow 75 wolves to be taken, with the season starting Sept. 15.

Montana is home to an estimated 500 wolves, while Idaho has at least 850. Wyoming also has wolves, but they remain under Endangered Species Act protection.

In Stone's opinion, hunting wolves could create even more problems for ranchers.

"If the adults are shot, then the young ones are dispersed too early," Stone said. "Young pups on their own might turn to livestock to survive, and that's not a good situation for anybody."

Her organization has put out a book to educate ranchers on proactive steps they can take to prevent livestock loss, like hiring range riders, hanging "fladry" - closely spaced cloth - on fences, and minimizing attractants such as dead carcasses.

Defenders of Wildlife has spent more than \$895,000 since 1998 to help pay for installation of nonlethal methods to prevent conflicts.

Since 1987, they've also made 885 payments totaling \$1.35 million to ranchers to compensate for livestock killed by wolves.

In Montana, the Legislature has earmarked \$150,000 to compensate ranchers for livestock lost to wolves, and U.S. Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont., co-sponsored a bill that includes \$5 million in federal funding over five years for depredation losses.

George Edwards, state livestock loss mitigation coordinator, said the Rebish/Konen Ranch probably will receive \$350 per dead sheep.

But he added that the loss is more than just monetary to ranchers.

"The compensation still doesn't make up for the loss by any means," Edwards said. "The rancher still needs to make up his breeding stock, and people in town may not realize the attachment livestock folk get to their animals. The emotional toll it takes is just indescribable."

Reporter Eve Byron can be reached at (406) 447-4076

WHITE
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FUNDING
MT WS receives \$110,000/year from the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Department (MFWP) for wolf damage management activities. This is from hunting license revenue.

CA WS receives \$20,000/year for Public Safety (coyotes, black bears, and mountain lions) from the California Department of Fish and Game. CA WS also receives \$100,000/year from CDFG for feral swine depredation work. (hunting license revenue). CA WS receives additional funding from CDFG to protect Eden Landing snowy plover/least tern/salt marsh harvest mouse (\$21,000.00 per year), Nevada bighorn sheep (\$208,075 per year), and Batiquitos - least tern/snowy plover (\$49,999 per year).

Currently CO-WS receives \$120,000/year from the Colorado Division of Wildlife. It is to assist with bear and lion depredations and other special projects such as urban coyotes. It is license revenue.

North Dakota operates on a 2-year budget cycle and ND WS receives \$768,800 (\$384,400/year) from the ND Game & Fish Department for our furbearer damage management work. These funds are 100% hunting license revenues. In addition, each year ND WS receives \$30,000/year (again, 100% hunting license revenues) to manage goose damage. So, total funding each year to ND WS from NDGFD is \$414,400.

In Nevada there is a \$3 fee on every big game application. Not the tag but on every application. This generates about \$400,000 every year of sportsmen's dollars not general fund. If the money is not spent, it rolls over from year to year. Most of the money comes to WS but some is spent by Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW). The Nevada WS budget for this year on projects voted and approved by the Wildlife Commission is \$471,000. Most of the projects are to protect mule deer, bighorn sheep, sage grouse, and a couple of small pheasant and turkey projects.

AZ WS receives about \$40,000/year for aerial antelope protection, \$7,500/year for black-footed ferret disease monitoring, and on call for human health & safety issues for coyotes and mountain lions from Arizona Game & Fish Department. The AGFD does not receive general funds from the state legislature. License fees do not provide any dedicated funding. It could be from multiple sources including donations, licenses, Sec 6 funds, heritage lottery funds, and tribal casino funds. Funding sources are not specifically identified in agreements.

UT WS receives \$459,000/year for coyote work on deer units (mostly in the form of aerial hunting), \$22,000/year for lion control on bighorn sheep units, and \$30,000/year for raven, red fox, and coyote control on sage grouse leks. The bighorn sheep and sage grouse agreements are federal agreements with WS, but the deer protection agreement is legislative general fund money to Utah Dept. of Ag and Food. It originally came from a \$5 surcharge on license sales, but they thought they would compromise their Pittman-Robertson (PI) grants, so they paid for the predator control out of state general funds and used the increased license revenues for something else. The original amount of our funding was \$500,000/year but it was reduced to \$400,000/year in 2009 because of the economic downturn. There is also a statutory 25% match paid by the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR) on all head tax that is collected, and this year it came to \$59,000. UT WS had a meeting two weeks ago with the director of Dept. of Natural Resources and the Director of Division of Wildlife Resources (a division within the DNR), and they are providing us an additional \$150,000 for deer protection this year (state FY 2010), then \$200,000 per year in 2011, and again in 2012 from their discretionary funds. They did indicate they had re-examined the legal ramifications of using PI funds for predator control, and they feel they can now legally do it. The UT State Legislature plans to propose an additional license tag increase next year that go to WS for coyote control, but they have not given an indication of how much this tag increase will be.

South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks conducts their own predator and beaver damage management program. They put in \$610,660 of state funds/year (general funds and license revenue) plus an additional \$305,330/year of cooperative funding (livestock tax for predator and beaver damage

management) they receive from the Counties. By state law, SD GFP must match cooperative dollars from livestock producers 2:1 (\$2.00 from the game department for every cooperative \$1.00).

Idaho Fish & Game gives \$50,000/year to the State ADC Board to fund some of ID WS' predator control efforts, another \$50,000/year to ID WS for mule deer protection in Eastern Idaho, another \$50,000/year to fund some wolf control work by ID WS (we plan on using this when we start taking wolves to protect elk) and another \$16,000/year to ID WS for feral pig control in South-Central Idaho. ID WS also got kind of an "on call" arrangement with IDFG where we will do some fixed-wing aerial hunting work at their request (anywhere from \$200 - 6,000/year). I doubt they are using any license fees for that, but I'm not sure.

In WI, WS gets approximately \$1,264,000 from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Bureau of Wildlife for wolf (\$20,664), double-crested cormorants (\$20,705), beaver (\$146,300), bear (\$164,720), and wildlife damage abatement and claims (\$911,703). The entire Wildlife Damage and Abatement and Claims Program (WDACP) is built around a surcharge on every hunting license sold. The beaver damage management funding comes from a surcharge on state hunting licenses including trout stamp sales and waterfowl stamp sales (wild rice protection). Surcharges on hunting licenses is the primary funding source for the WDACP. A portion of the bear nuisance program funding also comes from hunters dollars as well.

For over a decade, AR-WS has received \$260,000 annually, from Arkansas Game & Fish Commission to handle migratory bird problems. This year AR WS have added feral hog control on one Wildlife Management Area, at the AGFC's request. The funds come from one-eighth of one percent of general revenue state funding.

The Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW) provides OR WS with \$60,000/year of general funds for use to address conflicts with predatory animals as defined by state statute (birds & rodents injurious to agriculture & property, this includes the furbearer beaver when causing damage on private land but not public land, as well as coyote and feral pigs). ODFW also gives OR WS \$50,000/year of sportsmen's tag money to manage game animals and furbearers they are charged with managing, cougars, bears, wolves when they are not federally listed and other furbearers. ODFW also gives OR WS \$35,000/year to administratively remove cougars out of the Steens Game Management Unit (GMU), these are sportsmen's dollars. Finally, ODFW provides OR WS with \$5,000/year for administrative removal of cougars in the Wenaha GMU.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department pays WY WS to conduct trophy game damage management work. WY WS charges WGFD \$35/hour to cover the costs of WY WS responding to complaints and assisting WGFD on an hourly basis (salary, benefits, vehicle etc.) In the same agreement WY WS is available to conduct aerial operations at WGFD's request. The agreement generally amounts to somewhere between \$15,000 and \$30,000 per year. It is funded from hunting license revenues.

MONTANA WOLF CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT PLANNING DOCUMENT *DRAFT*

*PREPARED IN RESPONSE TO
THE WOLF MANAGEMENT
ADVISORY COUNCIL
RECOMMENDATIONS
JANUARY 2002*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – excerpts from this document.

Wolf population management will include the full range of tools from non-lethal to lethal and will incorporate public outreach, conservation education, law enforcement, and landowner relations. Wolves do not exist in isolation from their environment, nor should an effective management program isolate wolves from their environment. Management actions will be evaluated in light of prevailing conditions or extenuating circumstances. Wolf populations will fluctuate as a result of management actions, natural mortality, legal harvest, illegal take, wolf productivity, and ungulate population fluctuations. If there are fewer than 15 wolf packs in the state, management tools are primarily non-lethal, particularly in backcountry settings and for public lands near national parks.

Examples of non-lethal techniques include monitoring wolf locations using radio telemetry, changes in livestock husbandry practices, harassment, relocation, or attempts to modify wolf behavior. A minimum of 15 packs is required to use more liberal management tools, including lethal methods to resolve wolf-livestock, wolf-human conflicts, or concern over a localized prey population in light of the combined effects of predation and environmental factors.

MFWP will share responsibility with Montana Department of Livestock(MDOL) in managing wolf-livestock conflicts because Montana statutes assign responsibility to both agencies to manage wildlife causing damage to livestock. Wolves can create problems for some livestock producers. Financial losses may result directly from wolf depredation. Indirect costs may accumulate because of increased management activities, changes in husbandry practices, or uncompensated losses. These financial hardships accrue to individual farmers and ranchers and may be significant to them. Addressing wolf-livestock conflicts will entail two separate, but parallel elements. One element is the wolf management activities carried out by Wildlife Services (WS) and MFWP to minimize the potential for wolf-livestock conflicts and to resolve the conflicts where and when they develop. Examples are providing technical assistance, investigating complaints, and taking actions that reduce the probability that the offending wolf or wolves will be involved in another depredation incident. The management programs will be funded, administered, and implemented by the cooperating agencies. The second element addresses the economic losses through a compensation program when livestock are killed or injured by wolves.

The two elements, management and compensation, are funded, administered, and implemented separately and independently of one another -- but parallel one another, united in the goal of maintaining a viable wolf population and addressing wolf-livestock conflicts. MFWP and MDOL will work together, along with WS, to address and resolve wolf-livestock conflicts through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). MFWP, in cooperation with MDOL, will contract WS to respond to landowner or livestock producer wolf depredation complaints, to conduct field investigations, and to carry out management actions. MFWP has the ultimate responsibility for determining the disposition of wolves.

Montana recognizes that wolf population recovery and persistence will result in the loss of personal property or income due to wolf activity and depredation. Compensation is critical to maintaining tolerance for wolves by livestock producers who are adversely affected by financial losses due to wolves. Montana would like to maintain and enhance the benefits of the compensation program. But compensation payments cannot be made from MFWP funds or matching federal funds intended for wildlife or habitat programs. The State of Montana intends to find or create an entity to administer a compensation program if Defenders of Wildlife rescinds eligibility of Montana ranchers upon delisting. The entity or non-governmental organization would be independent of MFWP and MDOL to retain impartiality and the terms and negotiations take place directly with the producer. Agency decision-making on the disposition of the problem animal is independent of the outcomes of the compensation negotiations. Producers would be compensated for *confirmed* and *probable* livestock losses at fair market value at the time of death and at fall value for young of the year. Eligible livestock include cattle, calves, hogs, pigs, horses, mules, sheep, lambs, goats, and guarding animals. Despite the present uncertainty of how a compensation program would be designed and

administered, securing adequate funding for compensation is of equal priority as securing funding to implement the other state and federal agency management activities described in this plan.

We are committed to using MFWP funds and matching federal funds to conserve and manage this native species on equal standing with other carnivore species. We also acknowledge that existing financial resources are not adequate to fully implement all aspects of this plan. Some of the activities described in this plan fall within existing duties and responsibilities already carried out by MFWP or WS, but some activities clearly add to existing responsibilities and workloads. Additional funding will be required to implement wolf management (and related activities) and compensation. While the monies and administrative procedures to fulfill these parallel functions may or may not originate from the same source, adequate funds for each element are necessary. We will seek additional funding from a diversity of sources, including special state or federal appropriations, private foundations, or other private sources.

This is a link to Montana's wolf management plan. Pages 41 & 42 describe LLRMB.

<http://fwpiis.mt.gov/content/getItem.aspx?id=42350>

Montana Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Program: a Montana-based Reimbursement Program

The Montana Wolf Conservation and Management Plan called for creation of a Montana-based program to address the economic impacts of verified wolf-caused livestock losses. The plan identified the need for an entity independent from MFWP to administer the program. The plan also identified that the reimbursement program would be funded through sources independent from MFWP's wolf management dollars and other MFWP funds intended for fish and wildlife management.

The creation of an adequately funded loss reduction and damage mitigation program will help determine the degree to which people will share the land with wolves, to which the success of wolf recovery can be assured into the future, and the degree to which individual livestock operators who are adversely affected economically by wolf recovery are able to remain viable. Maintaining private lands in agricultural production provides habitat for a wide variety of wildlife in Montana and is vital to wolf conservation in the long run.

In keeping with Montana's tradition of broad-based citizen participation in wolf conservation and management, a diverse, 30-member working group met 4 times in 2005. The working group was comprised of private citizens, representatives from non-governmental organizations, and representatives from state and federal agencies. A smaller subcommittee continued to meet in 2006. This group finalized a framework which then became the basis for legislation in the 2007 Montana Legislature.

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There are three basic components: a loss reduction element, a loss mitigation element, and the state wolf management plan. MFWP and USDA WS would fulfill their responsibilities and roles outlined in the state management plan. The loss reduction and loss mitigation elements are administered by an independent quasi-judicial board that is administratively attached to the Montana Department of Livestock.

Of particular concern to all participants was the need to secure funding for both the proactive work and the loss reimbursement components of the Montana wolf program. The working group explored a variety of funding mechanisms. Both the Montana Wolf Advisory Council and the second working group concluded that the MLLRMP would be funded through special state or federal appropriations or private donations. Both groups agreed that MFWP's wolf management dollars, and other MFWP funds (license revenue and federal matching Pittman-Robertson or Dingle Johnson dollars) would not be used to reimburse wolf-caused losses. Private donations will also be sought.

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group was introduced and passed (HB364). The legislation created the Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Board to administer programs for the mitigation and reimbursement of livestock losses by wolves. It also established the quasi-judicial board, its purpose, membership, powers and duties, and reporting requirements. The Board is administratively attached to the Montana Department of Livestock, but its role and duties are wholly independent from the Department and the Montana Board of Livestock and vice versa. Late in 2007, the Governor appointed the first Board.

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The legislation also codified much of the actual draft framework in state law. It directed the Board to establish a program to cost-share with livestock producers who are interested in implementing measures to decrease the risk of wolf predation on livestock. It also directed the Board to establish and administer a program to reimburse livestock producers for losses caused by wolves. While some details of the grant program (loss reduction) and the reimbursement program (loss mitigation) are established in statute, the Board will still need to establish additional details through a rule-making process, which will include public comment opportunities. Rulemaking is expected in 2009 2010 to finalize and establish other program implementation details in the Administrative Rules of Montana.

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<http://fwpiis.mt.gov/content/getItem.aspx?id=31249>

The second element addresses the economic losses of individual livestock producers through a compensation program when livestock are injured or killed by wolves. The two elements, management and compensation, are funded, administered, and implemented separately and independently of one another -- but parallel one another, united in the goal of maintaining a viable wolf population and addressing economic losses. This Alternative would maintain and enhance the benefits of the compensation program. The State of Montana intends to find or create an entity to administer a compensation program.

This alternative would be funded using a combination of sources to conserve and manage this native species on equal standing with other carnivores like mountain lions or black bears. License revenue will be used to partially fund the program since FWP intends to use regulated harvest as a management tool. FWP acknowledges that existing financial resources are not adequate. FWP seek will additional funding from a diversity of sources, including special state or federal appropriations, private foundations, or other private sources. The states of Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming are still investigating the idea of a grizzly bear/gray wolf trust fund that would be created through a special federal appropriation to fund the conservation and management of these two species of national significance. Compensation for livestock losses would be funded independently.

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EIS Chapter 1

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The council delivered its report and recommendations to Gov. Racicot, and then governor-elect Judy Martz, in early 2001. Based on its public deliberations, the council reported that the State of Montana could contribute to wolf recovery in the northern Rockies. Furthermore, the council reported that, once recovered, wolves can coexist within Montana's complex biological, social, economic, and political landscape and that it is appropriate for FWP to develop a management program.

More specifically, the advisory council recommended that Montana:

- maintain wolf populations at levels that will prevent reclassification as .threatened. or .endangered. under federal law.
- encourage wolves to inhabit large, contiguous public-land areas where the potential for conflict is lowest.
- integrate wolf and wildlife management to maintain traditional hunting heritage and wildlife viewing opportunities.

- incorporate public outreach and encourage Native American cooperation.
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- enhance deer and elk populations to support wolf populations, maintain recreational and viewing opportunities, and reduce the potential for livestock depredation.
- use hunting and trapping to manage increasing wolf numbers in a manner that will sustain wolf populations and preclude reclassification under federal law.
- recognize that tolerance for wolves on private property is fundamental to wolf population recovery and range expansion.
- compensate livestock owners for losses at fair market value but do not use FWP funds to compensate depredation losses.
- provide incentives to livestock producers who use best management practices to decrease wolf/livestock conflicts.
- allow livestock owners to address wolf depredation problems on private lands as wolf numbers increase.
- use wolf numbers to address the management of wolf depredations on livestock. When wolf numbers are low, more conservative methods should be applied; more aggressive control methods should be applied as wolf numbers increase.

At the end of 2000, FWP officials characterized the advisory council's report as the first step toward acquiring wolf management responsibilities from the federal government. The group's work was aimed directly at helping to determine how to balance wolf numbers with the deer and elk they prey upon, address conflicts with livestock operations, ensure human safety, and how Montana's wolf management responsibilities should be funded.

With the advisory council's report in hand, Gov. Judy Martz directed FWP to use it to frame a wolf management plan. In response, FWP released the Montana Wolf Conservation and Management Planning Document in January 2002 (Appendix 1). While the 117-page planning document reflected what a state wolf management plan could resemble if it were based on the council's work and recommendations, FWP still needed to hear from others and explore various alternatives before adopting a management plan in full compliance with the legal requirements of MEPA.

This is a link to Montana's wolf management plan. Pages 41 & 42 describe LLRMB.

<http://fwpiis.mt.gov/content/getItem.aspx?id=42350>

Montana Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Program: a Montana-based Reimbursement Program

The Montana Wolf Conservation and Management Plan called for creation of a Montana-based program to address the economic impacts of verified wolf-caused livestock losses. The plan identified the need for an entity independent from MFWP to administer the program. The plan also identified that the reimbursement program would be funded through sources independent from MFWP's wolf management dollars and other MFWP funds intended for fish and wildlife management.

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MONTANA Wolf Hunt 2009



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better position to work with Defenders of Wildlife or some other entity to help design a compensation program based on the cooperative input from livestock producers, non-governmental organizations, and other interested parties.

43 APPENDIX I Funding

~~Compensation has been an important companion to federal agency wolf management activities with respect to wolf-livestock conflicts. Under state management authority, similar needs will exist. Montana would like to maintain and enhance the benefits of the compensation program. But the state is prohibited from financially compensating citizens for damages caused by wildlife. We do not foresee any changes in this regard. Instead, MFWP and MDOL offer technical assistance, consult with WS, or use other management tools to address damage caused by wildlife. Since compensation payments cannot be made from MFWP funds or matching federal monies intended for wildlife or habitat programs, securing alternative funding is crucial to program success. Nonetheless, MFWP is exploring alternative funding sources, including: a surcharge to national parks entrance fees to be earmarked for wolf conservation and management activities in the tri-state area, a livestock insurance program through USDA, a national wolf management trust fund, and private donations or non-governmental organizational support.~~ MFWP is also looking into the feasibility of a livestock insurance program for producers, which is modeled after the crop insurance program. Producers would pay a subsidized premium to insure livestock for losses due to wolves. Loss payments would come from premiums collected over all producers and from private donations. WS would verify losses.

Despite the present uncertainty of how a compensation program would be designed and administered, funding this element of the overall wolf management program is essential to its successful implementation. The State of Montana will pursue all possible funding sources including, but not limited to public/private foundations, federal or state appropriations, and other private sources. Securing adequate funding for compensation is of equal priority as securing funding to implement the state and federal agency management activities. A later chapter also discusses funding possibilities for a compensation program.

Procedures

Although many of the details about funding, administration, or relationship to management actions by agencies or livestock producers are still unknown at this time, WS will investigate cases of suspected wolf depredation, just as they do for other wildlife species causing damage to livestock. If WS confirms that a wolf was responsible, the producer would be eligible for compensation, regardless of whether the incident occurred on public or private lands. If the field investigation concludes that wolf depredation was probable, the producer would also be eligible for compensation. Additional research is required to examine the question of undocumented livestock losses.

Producers would be compensated for livestock losses at fair market value at the time of death and at fall value for young of the year. Eligible livestock include cattle, calves, hogs, pigs, horses, mules, sheep, lambs, goats, and guarding animals. The Council recommended that losses of household domestic pets should not be compensated, but acknowledged the significant emotional loss. The Council also recommended that losses at alternative livestock (game farm) facilities should not be compensated. Wolf ingress into a poorly secured facility is the responsibility of the operator. The fact that many alternative livestock facilities confine native prey species, which may naturally attract wolf activity, further precludes payments for these losses. In the same vein, recreationists take responsibility for their pets when recreating in occupied wolf habitat.

Economic

One economic challenge of wolf presence in Montana stems from the real and perceived imbalance between the economic and social costs experienced by individuals, businesses, organizations, or agencies most directly affected by wolves and the economic and social benefits that accrue to those less directly affected. The costs and benefits do not accrue equitably to the same individuals, businesses, organizations, or agencies.

The USFWS predicted that some segments of the economy would be negatively affected and others would be positively affected by wolf restoration in the GYA and central Idaho (USFWS 1994a). Negative costs were predicted for livestock producers who experienced wolf-related livestock losses and for hunting-related businesses. Positive economic benefits were expected for businesses related to tourism, outdoor recreation, and national park visitation.

Individual producers may experience significant direct and/or indirect economic impacts due to wolf presence or depredation (Bangs et al. 1998). In the GYA and central Idaho recovery areas to date, confirmed wolf-caused livestock losses have been less than predicted (Bangs et al. 1998). Predictions were not made for the Northwestern Montana Recovery Area, although there has been at least one depredation event in every year except one, from 1987-2000. Producers could have other losses beyond what is confirmed and documented. Since 1987, a privately



The 2009 Montana Wolf Hunting Season

SUMMARY

The 2009 wolf hunting season was the first fair chase hunting season in Montana's history. Historically, private citizen efforts to kill wolves occurred under eradication programs intended to purposefully remove all wolves from the western landscape. At that time, unlimited numbers of wolves could be killed year long by any means, including poison. This was done for money and commercial profit under a bounty system. Contemporary wolf hunting is based on the principles of fair chase and ethical hunter behavior, with penalties for regulatory violations. Regulations and allowable harvest levels are established consistent with conserving the wolf population in perpetuity.

Most wolves were opportunistically harvested by hunters who were primarily hunting elk or elk/deer in combination. Many of those hunters saw 2-3 wolves prior to harvesting one. Hunters report seeing wolves while hunting deer and elk, and it appears that they are able to detect wolves in their relative degrees of abundance on the western Montana landscape. Therefore knowledge about deer and elk hunter effort and success will provide important insight into future wolf harvest management.

Montana's fragmented landscape is accessible to hunters by either motorized or non-motorized travel. Thus, most wolves are relatively accessible to big game hunters in most places where wolves live and elk/deer hunting occurs. This is in contrast to Idaho where remote, rugged terrain in many wolf districts appeared to contribute to the slower pace of harvest and a season extension.

Through time, wolves might alter their behaviors in response to hunting, as other species have learned to do. However, hunters demonstrated that they can successfully harvest wolves under a fair chase system. Regulated public harvest will be an important population management tool for wolves that can be used, designed, and tailored as appropriate, based on a population's status, just as it has been for Montana's other big game species.

As is the case for many other species, wolf harvest can be successfully managed through a quota-based approach. A quota system establishes the total number of wolves that could be harvested before the season starts. Hunters are required to report harvesting a wolf within 12 hours. FWP can and does track progress towards filing the pre-determined quota levels practically in "real" time. FWP can initiate a season closure in individual hunting units, anticipating that the quota is about to be filled.

There were no biological red flags in the harvest. Harvest was geographically spread out (see map) and age classes were generally representative of what was in the wolf population. Wolf hunter harvest decreased the size of individual packs by one to four wolves just ahead of the February 2010 breeding season. But even so, the level of hunter harvest combined with all other mortality in 2009 will not harm Montana's wolf population.

All of the harvest information will be assessed, in conjunction with other data gathered throughout the year and field-based population monitoring efforts to determine the status and trend of the wolf population at the end of 2009. FWP will consider all of the information prior to proposing changes in the 2010/2011 hunting regulations and the 2010 hunting season quotas.



BY THE NUMBERS

The following information was gathered when hunters presented whole carcasses or skulls/pelts to FWP for inspection and registration, as required by the regulations. Biological data were collected from the wolves. Successful hunters also provided information about their wolf hunting experiences. In 2010, FWP will conduct a telephone harvest survey of a sample of all wolf license buyers to more fully understand wolf hunting effort and the 2009 season. This will be similar to the telephone harvest survey conducted for other species such as deer and elk.

About the Harvested Wolves

Summary

No biological red flags were raised by what was removed from the population through hunting. Age classes of the harvested wolves approximates what was in the population. Harvest was well distributed geographically. Between 40 and 50 packs sustained harvest of between one and four wolves total per pack. Harvest did not harm the population overall.

Details

General age classification:

- 22 juveniles; 31% of total harvest
- 22 yearlings; 31% of total harvest
- 27 adults; 38% of total harvest
- 1 unknown

Weights:

- Juveniles weighed 62 pounds on average. Yearlings weighed about 80 pounds. Adults weighed 97 pounds. One wolf weighed 117 pounds.

Sex of harvest:

- A total of 41 males and 31 females were harvested.

Color:

- Sixty one percent the harvested wolves were gray; 36% were black and two wolves were white.

Health:

- Most wolves were healthy. Two wolves had slight mange. One wolf had fleas. One had porcupine quills in its shoulder and two wolves reportedly had hernias.

Radio Collars:

Of the total 72 wolves harvested, 7 wore radio collars. The radio collar is a very important tool to gather a variety of data, including mortality information. As used in many other wildlife monitoring and research efforts, data gathered from radio collared animals allows biologists to estimate survival and cause specific mortality rates with unbiased statistical confidence, including hunting.



About the 2009 Wolf Hunt

Summary

Most wolves (78%) were opportunistically harvested by hunters who were primarily hunting elk or elk/deer in combination. The harvest was well distributed geographically, though more clumped in WMU 3 during the early backcountry season than expected. Once the general season opened on October 25, the pace of wolf harvest was steady and averaged about 20 wolves per week. The season closed statewide on Nov. 16 when quotas were nearly filled in WMU 1 and WMU 2 and the quota in WMU 3 had already been exceed by one wolf. Had the final quotas been higher, they would likely have been filled.

Details

The total statewide quota was 75. A total of 72 were harvested during the early and general seasons combined. The season closed statewide on Nov. 16. Had the final quotas been higher, they would likely have been filled.

- WMU 1 quota was 41; 38 harvested total
- WMU 2 quota was 22; 21 harvested total
- WMU 3 quota was 12; 13 harvested total

During the early backcountry season, 12 wolves were harvested. The pace of harvest during the WMU 3 backcountry season was faster than many expected, and FWP closed it prior to the entire WMU 3 quota being taken in the backcountry, thus reserving the opportunity for the remaining 3 wolves during the general season elsewhere in WMU 3.

- 3 wolves were harvested in WMU 1 (deer/elk hunting districts 150/151/280) from Sept. 15 to Oct. 24
- 9 wolves were harvested in WMU 3 (deer/elk hunting district 316) from Sept. 15 to Oct. 4; this backcountry area closed temporarily on Oct. 9 and permanently on Oct. 13

During the general season, 60 wolves were harvested between Oct. 25 and Nov. 15, which corresponds to first three weeks of the general deer/elk firearm season. The general season closed one half hour after sunset on Nov. 16 after quotas were nearly reached in both WMU 1 and 2. WMU 3 had previously closed on Oct. 26.

- 35 wolves harvested in WMU 1
- 21 wolves harvested in WMU 2
- 4 wolves harvested in WMU 3

Ten wolves were harvested statewide on Oct. 25, the most of any day. The pace of the harvest was steady and averaged about 20 per week. After opening day, the most wolves harvested statewide on any one day was six. On most days, however, between one and four wolves were harvested. After the general season opened, there were only two days during which no wolves were harvested.

Hunter harvest decreased individual pack size ahead of the 2010 breeding season. The greatest number of wolves harvested from a single pack was four. Of all the packs from which wolves were harvested, 70% lost one wolf, and 20% lost two wolves. Thus, 90% of the packs sustaining harvest lost only one or two wolves. The overall harvest was well distributed across packs geographically.

Most wolves (73%) were harvested before noon during both the early backcountry and the general seasons.



Most hunters did not use predator calls during either the early or the general season. A few hunters did and/or reported howling.

About 15 wolves were harvested from about ten different packs that had a prior history of confirmed livestock injury or death. Hunter harvest did not appear to accelerate or contribute to livestock conflicts. Some of these packs had injured or killed livestock or domestic dogs before the hunting season started and did so again after the season closed. Others had confirmed livestock conflicts before the hunting season started but not injure or kill livestock during the remainder of the year.

Wolves were harvested at an average distance of 150 yards using firearms (range 10-430 yards; a reported outlier of 600 yards was omitted from the average). No wolves were harvested with archery equipment, although it would have been lawful during either the early backcountry or general season. There was no archery only season in 2009.

Most wolves (82%) were harvested on public lands:

- public lands: U.S. Forest Service n=57; Bureau of Land Management n=1; state land n=1
- private: deeded land n=9; Plum Creek Timber Company n=4
- Even though most of the harvest was on public land, harvest did occur in about 10 packs having confirmed prior incidents with livestock or domestic dogs

Wolves were harvested in 15 counties in western and southwestern Montana. Neither the Blackfeet Nation nor the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes opened a 2009 wolf hunting season.

- Of the total harvest statewide, 75% occurred in 7 counties: Flathead (11), Ravalli (9), Beaverhead (9), Park (9), Lincoln (6), Sanders (6), and Lewis and Clark (4)
- The other counties were: Missoula, Mineral, Lake, Teton, Granite, Gallatin, and Sweetgrass

Harvest was well distributed spatially with the exception of the early backcountry season north of Yellowstone National Park where harvest was more concentrated. See map. Where more wolves were harvested at a local scale, more wolf packs exist or the existing wolf packs were larger than the average of 6 wolves.

During both the early backcountry and general seasons, hunters reported seeing an average of 2-3 wolves prior to harvesting a wolf. Some hunters harvested the first wolf seen, while others hunters reported seeing 6-27 wolves before harvesting a wolf.

During both the early backcountry and general seasons, hunters reported seeing 2-3 wolves in the group from which they killed a wolf. Some hunters reported that the wolf was by itself and some reported seeing as many as 10 in the group at the time of harvest.

During the early season, most wolves were skinned in the field, and the pelt/skull were presented for inspection and registration, as allowed by the regulations. During the general season, about half of the wolves were skinned in the field and about half were retrieved whole.

Three illegal wolf mortalities were documented during the fall months. Only one was clearly affiliated with the wolf hunting season as the hunter reported harvesting a wolf after the season had officially closed. The other two wolves were found dead in circumstances resembling illegal mortalities documented at other times of year – wolves were shot from a road. It is unclear whether these incidents were related to the fact that there was an open hunting season or not. Regardless, all three incidents are classified as illegal mortality and will be reported as such in the 2009 annual report.



About the Successful Wolf Hunter

Summary

Most wolves were harvested by hunters who reported hunting primarily for elk or elk/deer in combination. They had purchased a wolf license in case an opportunity to harvest a wolf presented itself. Therefore, consideration of elk and deer hunting activities (i.e. amount and distribution of hunter effort) relative to wolf pack distribution and wolf density would be appropriate when considering future wolf hunting regulations and quota levels. From the deer/elk telephone harvest surveys in 2007 and 2008, FWP learned that roughly 5-8% of deer/elk hunters who hunted in those two years reported seeing at least one wolf while hunting deer and elk. The vast majority of those observations occurred during the 5-week general deer/elk season.

Details

Early season backcountry hunters were evenly split between whether they were primarily hunting wolf or another species. In contrast, the majority of general season hunters were not primarily hunting wolves. Wolf harvest was incidental to hunting elk or hunting elk/deer, in that order respectively.

Overall at the statewide level and both seasons combined, 78% of the wolves were harvested opportunistically by individuals hunting for elk or elk/deer in combination.

Most successful hunters were hunting on their own, without an outfitter. Six wolves were harvested by hunters with an outfitter.

Most successful wolf hunters were Montana residents. Three successful non-residents were from Washington, Ohio, and Georgia.

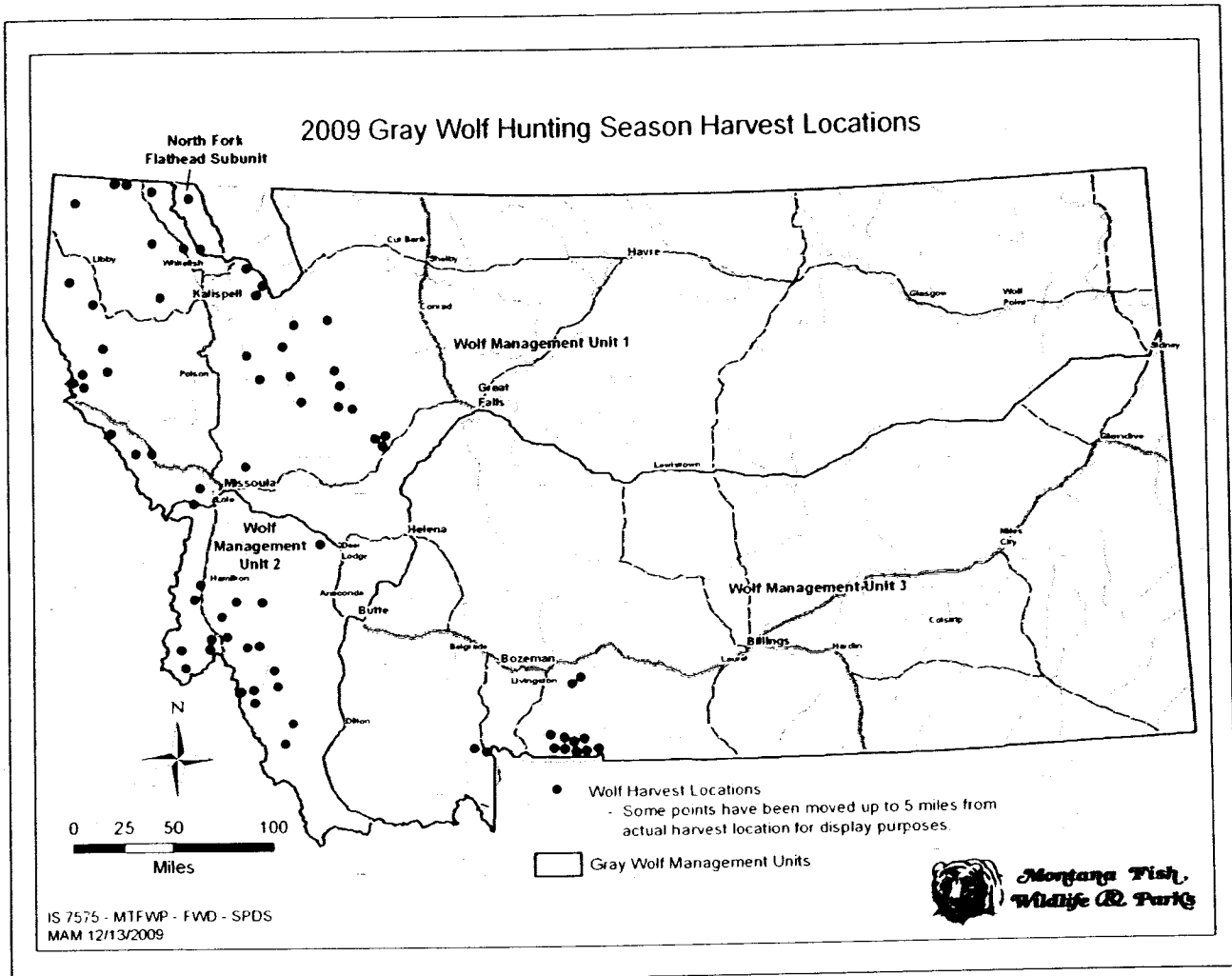
Successful wolf hunters were primarily male and averaged 42 years of age. The oldest was 70 years old and the youngest was 13 years old.

FWP sold a total of 15,603 licenses (15,514 residents; 89 non-residents). FWP stopped selling wolf hunting licenses on Nov. 16, as there was no longer a hunting opportunity once the quotas were nearly met and the season closed.

The Montana Legislature set the price of a wolf hunting license at \$19 for residents and \$350 for non residents. Licenses were available for purchase from August 31 to November 16 to anyone who had an interest in buying one. No licenses were sold after the season closed. Total license revenue was \$325,916. These funds were deposited into the FWP general license account and will be budgeted and spent for future FWP programs in the next biennium, as approved by the 2011 Montana Legislature.

Based on 2007 elk license sales figures, about 12% of Montana resident elk hunters also bought a wolf license in 2009.

FWP will be conducting a telephone harvest survey of wolf license buyers similar to those conducted every year for deer and elk hunting. This will yield additional information about the 2009 season and wolf hunting effort statewide and at the WMU level.



To learn more about Montana's wolf population, visit FWP at: www.fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf.

Hunters, other recreationists, and landowners can help FWP monitor the population by reporting wolf observations, tracks, or sign through the FWP online reporting button [Contact Us - Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks](#), by contacting the closest wolf specialist or FWP office, or mailing a wolf observation card.

To anonymously report a dead or injured wolf or any suspected illegal activity, call: 1-800-TIP-MONT.



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks' 2009 annual wolf program report summarizes successful efforts to implement the approved state plan to the extent allowed by federal regulations. FWP leads wolf monitoring, directs conflict management, coordinates and authorizes research, and leads outreach efforts. FWP works closely with Tribes, a variety of other state and federal agencies, interested organizations and individuals to continue the transition to managing wolves like other wildlife. Wolves were delisted in May, 2009.

Montana's wolf conservation and management plan is based on the work of the wolf advisory council, a diverse working group. Its balanced approach ensures the long-term success of wolf recovery in a landscape where people live, work, and recreate. The plan:

- recognizes wolves as a native species and part of Montana's wildlife heritage,
- allows wolves to find their place on the landscape similar to other wildlife, and
- manages the population in concert with available habitat, prey species, livestock conflicts, and human safety.

2009 Highlights

Wolf Numbers

- The population is secure but dynamic. Wolves share a landscape with people. Like other wildlife species, Montana's wolf population is subject to checks and balances, including strong reproduction in some areas, disease, vehicle strikes, and mortality due to conflicts with people.
- As of Dec. 31, 2009, FWP documented at least 524 wolves in 101 verified packs, 37 of which qualified as a "breeding pair." That's about a 4% increase from last year, compared to 18% the previous year. The rate of population growth is slowing down, in part because of the dampening effect of the combination of public harvest and agency control and because the best habitat is already occupied. Nonetheless, mortality was not high enough to stop or reverse population growth and the population is secure and well above recovery levels. A minimum of 166 pups were documented in 2009.
- The wolf population is distributed as follows:
 - Wolf Management Unit 1, Northwest Montana: at least 308 wolves in 64 packs, 23 breeding pairs.
 - Wolf Management Unit 2, Western Montana: at least 110 wolves in 20 packs, 5 breeding pairs.
 - Wolf Management Unit 3, Southwestern Montana: at least 106 wolves in 17 packs, 9 breeding pairs.
 - One and six packs occur on the Blackfeet and Flathead Indian reservations, respectively.
- Wolf Management Unit 1 accounted for the majority of the increase. Numbers in western and southwestern Montana remained stable or decreased slightly. Twenty-three packs straddle the Montana/Idaho border, and 14 of them are counted in Montana. Nine others are counted in the Idaho population. Additionally the Montana population grew of its own accord through numerous dispersals and formation of new packs.
- A total of 255 wolf mortalities were documented in Montana in 2009, 57% of which was livestock related (n=145 wolves). The remaining mortalities were: 68 legal harvest, 8 car/train strikes, 16 illegal, 1 incidental and agency-related, 2 natural, 2 electrocuted, 1 self defense, and 12 unknown.

Wolf Distribution

- Statewide, wolf distribution remained about the same. New 2009 packs established primarily in northwestern and western Montana near the ID border. But wolves are great travelers and could show up anywhere in Montana. Many dispersal events were documented and 26 new packs formed in 2009.

- About 90% of the Montana wolf population lives outside national parks on a combination of public and private lands.
- The public can help FWP monitor the wolf population by reporting wolves or wolf sign to FWP.

Outreach Activities

- Increasing public awareness of wolves and their management is a top priority for FWP. FWP works with local communities to incorporate wolves into the landscape and to strike the balance between wolves and people. Other FWP staff, USDA Wildlife Services personnel, and our tribal wildlife partners also provided information and did public outreach.
- Outreach efforts take many forms, including one-on-one conversations, media interviews, printed materials, documentary films, FWP Outdoor Reports and press releases, and formal presentations.
- FWP's wolf staff gave a minimum of 63 formal presentations to about 2800 people in 2009, but literally spoke to thousands more about wolf ecology, wolf-livestock interactions, wolf-big game interactions, human safety, Montana's wolf plan, federal delisting efforts, and more. Dozens of media interviews occurred, too.
- FWP's wolf management Web pages are very popular and visitors spend more time on the wolf pages than the average of all other FWP Web pages visited. In 2009, the FWP wolf web page was visited about 109,648 times, averaging about 150-400 visits day. The web page for hunters to track progress towards filling the wolf quotas was viewed 32,848 times between September 15 and November 2.

Wolf-Livestock Interactions

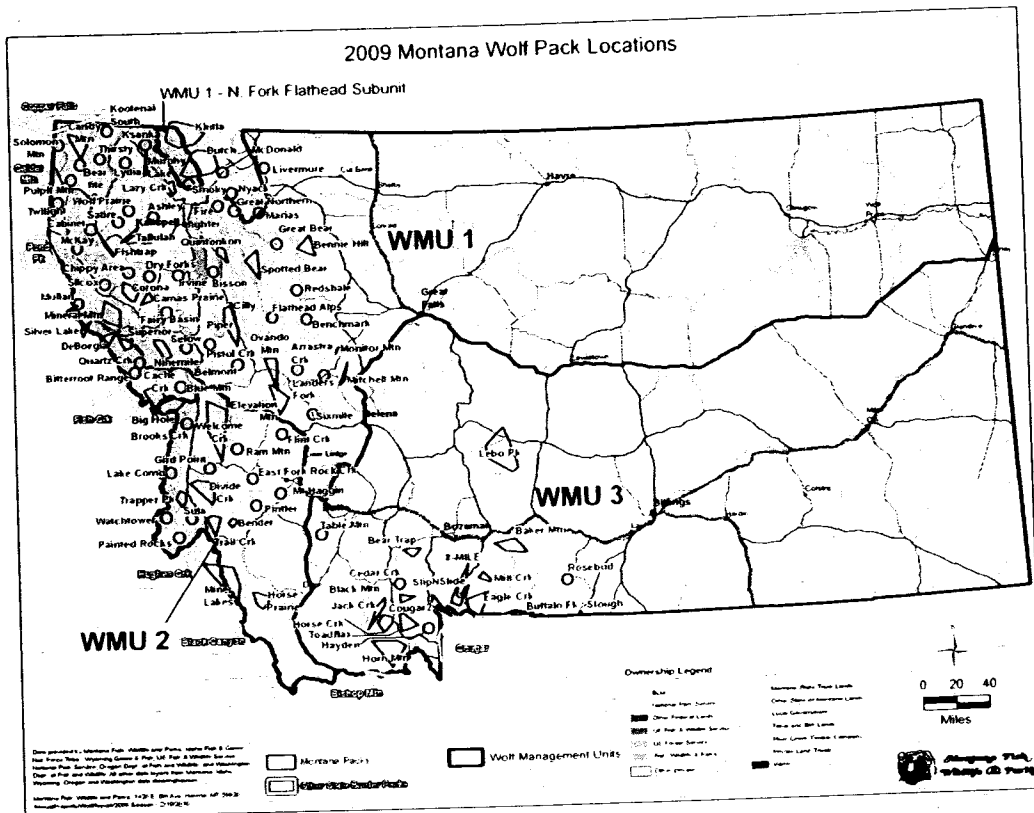
- Montana wolves routinely encounter livestock, though preying on them seems to be a learned behavior. Wolf depredation on livestock is difficult to predict in space and time.
- FWP and WS work together to reduce the risk of loss and address conflicts using a combination of non-lethal and lethal tools. With delisting, FWP decisions are guided by state laws, state regulations and the state plan. Conflicts are addressed on a case-by-case basis, striving to connect the agency response to the damage in space and time. This is similar to the approach taken when other wildlife species damage private property in Montana and lethal control is directed at the problem animals causing the damage.
- The Montana Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Program got underway in 2008. The goals are to decrease of risk of livestock loss through proactive tools and to reimburse losses. The Governor-appointed Board meets twice a year. With a small general fund appropriation and a significant donation from Defenders of Wildlife, \$141,462 in claims was paid for confirmed and probable death losses in 2009.
- Confirmed cattle death losses increased to 97 in 2009, and confirmed sheep death losses increased to 202. Other confirmed livestock losses include: 4 llamas, 4 dogs, and 2 goats. Other injury and death losses were not verified or were deemed "probable." Other impacts are difficult to quantify, but do occur.
- A total of 145 wolves were killed to prevent further depredations. Private citizens killed 10 wolves caught actively chasing or attacking livestock and no wolves were killed by special permit.

Funding, Delisting, and Regulated Public Hunting

- With Montanans' support, FWP took on the new responsibility of wolf conservation and management in 2004, contingent on federal funding. Federal funding continued in 2009. Montana is focused on securing adequate funding from federal and private sources for the long term.
- Wolves were delisted for a second time in May 2009 and legal challenges resumed. Montana intervened in the lawsuit by supporting delisting efforts. An injunction request was denied in September. All legal briefs have been filed and no decision in the case had been issued as of December 2009.
- Montana's first fair chase wolf hunting season occurred in 2009, with a total harvest of 72 wolves. The season went very smoothly and there were no biological red flags. Regulated public harvest will be an important population management tool for wolves, just as it has been for Montana's other big game species.

See: <http://fwp.mt.gov/wolf>

- to report wolves and wolf sign
- to learn more about wolves, their management, and the state program



Who Do I Contact?

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (to get information about wolves and wolf management):

Carolyn Sime
Gray Wolf Program Coordinator, Helena
406-461-0587 casime@mt.gov

Kent Laudon
Wolf Management Specialist, Kalispell
406-250-5047 klaudon@mt.gov

Liz Bradley
Wolf Management Specialist, Missoula
406-865-0017 lbradley@mt.gov

Nathan Lance
Wolf Management Specialist, Butte
406-425-3355 nlance@mt.gov

Mike Ross
Wolf Management Specialist, Bozeman
406-581-3664 mross@mt.gov

USDA Wildlife Services (to request investigations of injured or dead livestock):

Kraig Glazier, Helena
406-458-0106
Kraig.L.Glazier@aphis.usda.gov

John Steuber or Mike Foster, Billings
406-657-6464
John.E.Steuber@aphis.usda.gov or Mike.Foster@aphis.usda.gov

To Report a Dead Wolf or Possible Illegal Activity:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:
Missoula, Montana: (406) 329-3000
Casper, Wyoming: (307) 261-6365

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks:
1-800-TIP-MONT
Nearest FWP Regional Office or game warden

To learn more about Montana's Livestock Reduction and Mitigation Program and the Board's work:

George Edwards
Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Program Coordinator, Helena
406- 444-5609 gedwards@mt.gov